

CHRA-E INFORMATION EXPRESS



Issue 4

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Welcome to this latest issue of the CHRA-E Information Express. The intent of this publication is to disseminate information of interest to managers, supervisors, and civilian employees serviced by the CHRA – Europe Region.

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER*Lisa J. Lessard*

Last month, I along with the USAREUR, G-1 Civilian Personnel Director, had the privilege and honor of hosting Ms. Melinda McMillon Darby, the new Headquarters, Department of the Army Assistant G-1, Civilian Personnel. She was accompanied by Mr. Mike Vajda, the Director of the Civilian Human Resource Agency.

The primary purpose of Ms. Darby's visit to Europe was to meet the Civilian Human Resource Agency (CHRA) - Europe staff assigned to the Civilian Personnel Operation Center (CPOC) and the Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers (CPACs) throughout Europe. During her trip, Ms. Darby visited seven of our eight CPACs and the CPOC. She is planning to visit the 8th CPAC in September, when she is scheduled to return to the area to speak at the USAREUR Land Combat Expo.

Ms. Darby was assigned to her current position in January 2005. During her first year she is traveling the globe to meet members of her staff. Her primary objective is to meet with the CHR community and discuss service delivery issues. While on site, the staffs had the opportunity to exchange information about our customers, priorities, successes and challenges. She also met with top leaders in the Theater to discuss civilian human resource issues as well as the Army in Europe re-stationing initiatives. During the visit she observed strong partnerships and good relationships among the CPAC/CPOC community and managers, as well as our expanded HR family in both USAREUR and IMA.

Our community has an extremely important mission supporting Soldiers and an Army at war. Our success depends on our unwavering commitment to our values – Integrity, Caring, Service, Adaptability, Quality, and Partnerships. We are one team – and that came through during Ms. Darby's visit.

I want to thank the CHRA-E community for putting their best foot forward and making Ms. Darby's visit such a success.

Make the CHRA-Europe website your first stop for civilian personnel information. Check it out today at:

<http://www.chra.eur.army.mil/>

Army Portal Contact Link

The email contact link provided at the top of the CPOL Portal is not designed as a vehicle for individuals to submit questions regarding personnel issues they may have. The proper forum for raising such questions is first with your supervisor and then if needed, with your servicing Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC).

Questions concerning problems with the portal itself, may be sent through the contact link at the top of the Portal, but should really be sent to your servicing CPAC Personnel Systems Manager first, as they may already be aware of the problem and know how to assist you, or will be able to obtain the necessary information from you about the problem to elevate it properly.

ABC-C Counselors Now Available After Separation

Since 1 April 2005, employees that are serviced by the Department of the Army can now reach an Army Benefits Center – Civilian benefits counselor for a period of six months from their separation date for assistance with benefits related issues.

Employees, who resign, retire, or transfer, may continue to contact the ABC-C for assistance on benefits related issues pertaining to their separation and/or retirement transition.

Former employees will have exactly six months from the date of separation to contact the ABC-C by telephone. The extended service period will allow for a smoother transition for former employees in need of information and counseling services.

REVISED APPLICATION FORM (for LN Positions in Germany)

Are you familiar with the revised **Application/Bewerbung** (AE Form 690-70A) used to apply for Local National Positions in Germany? It became available for use on March 21, 2005.

Some of the significant changes to the AE Form 690-70A include:

- Expansion to 8 pages. This incorporates all of the questions that were on the additional supplemental application forms regarding availability and eliminates the need for the additional form.
- More detailed questions on education
- Includes family member/military spouse preference (FM/MSP) information
- Includes question on Severely Handicap Status
- supporting documentation still needs to be submitted at time of application
- Expands space for special skills and work experience

With the expanded application form, application procedures changed as follows:

Applicants need to fill out the application form **only**. Additional documents (Transcripts, training certificates, licenses, etc.) which are needed to verify the qualifications or the status will need to be requested from the selectee only. The only exception is that the supporting documentation for proof of severely handicapped or assimilated status must still be provided at time of application.

OPM/TSA Interchange Agreement

Effective 1 February 2005, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) entered into an agreement which allows for the movement of personnel between the Civil Service System and the DHS, Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Eligible TSA employees may be appointed to positions in the competitive civil service and employees serving in competitive civil service may be appointed to TSA positions. This agreement terminates 3 years from the effective date.

An Era Comes to an End

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Seasons will soon be a thing of the past. The last Open Season runs from April 15th through June 30th. During this Open Season you will again have the opportunity to initiate or change your contributions to TSP. The maximum contributions for this year are 15% for FERS employees and 10% for CSRS and the annual maximum deferral limit is \$14,000. The chart below outlines the timeframes for this last Open Season so you can see when your transaction will be effective and when you can expect to see the new amount reflected in your pay.

Created	Effective	Pay Date
15 Apr – 11 Jun	12 Jun 05	7 Jul 05
12 Jun – 25 Jun	26 Jun 05	21 Jul 05
26 – 30 Jun	10 Jul 05	4 Aug 05

With the elimination of Open Seasons this means that anytime you have the need to change your TSP contribution, you will be able to do so and the change will be effective at the beginning of the next pay period. If you elect to terminate contributions, it will be effective on the last day of the pay period and you will once again be able to contribute any time after that. These changes to the rules of TSP will allow you to manage your contributions efficiently.

For more information on this exciting program, please visit the TSP website at www.tsp.gov.

Reprinted from ABC-C Newsletter, *ABC-C News*, April 2005 edition.

NAF Employee Retiring Under CSRS or FERS

If you are a Nonappropriated Fund (NAF) employee who is retaining an appropriated fund retirement system (e.g. CSRS, FERS) and want to retire, the Army Benefits Center – Civilian (ABC-C) website at <https://www.abc.army.mil> has a wealth of information will assist you in the retirement planning and retirement process. Once at the website, click on Information, then Retirement, then Information under the retirement page. Scroll to the link: NAF Employee Retiring Under CSRS or FERS.

Priority Placement Program – Importance of a Good Resume

Registration in the PPP occurs 6-months prior to the end of their tours for employees reaching the end of the rotation agreement for their overseas assignments, who have not been extended and, either do not have return rights, or have return rights to a lower grade. As part of the registration process, the employees must provide a current, comprehensive, resume to the CPAC HR Specialist. This resume is used during the registration process to determine those skills for which an individual is well-qualified and may be registered. Further it is used when a position match occurs, along with the job description of the matched position, in determining whether the employee is well-qualified for the specific match.

A quality resume is pivotal to a successful job match. Supervisors and employees should be aware of the potential repercussions. The following is a reprint from the DoD Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS), Field Advisory Services, “FASTRACK”, Number 2004-3, September 2004.

Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) Administrative Judge Upholds DoD Five-Year Limit on Foreign Area Employment

On June 24, 2004, an MSPB Administrative Judge upheld the removal of an overseas employee for failure to accept a valid job offer within the continental United States after serving more than five years in a foreign area. The offer for continued employment was made through the DoD Priority Placement Program (PPP).

The case (*Hoffmann v. Department of the Navy*, MSPB Docket Number SE-0752-04-0073-I-1, initial decision, slip op. (August 9, 2004)) involved a GS-2210-12 Supervisory Information Technology Specialist. After a series of tour extensions, the appellant was informed in December 2000, that a further extension could not be granted.

Although the appellant had no rotation agreement in connection with his overseas employment, as a career employee he was subject to the five-year foreign area rotation policy (DoD Directive 1400.6, DoD Civilian

Employees in Overseas Areas, paragraph 3.3). As such, management initiated steps to return the appellant to the United States.

Since the appellant did not hold return rights to a position in the United States, he was registered in the PPP in March 2001. He submitted a poorly written PPP application in what may have been an attempt to avoid qualifying for stateside jobs. The registering personnel office ultimately required him to revise his application in order to remain in PPP. The appellant complied, and in 2002 he received a job offer (PPP match) for a GS-2210-12 Information Technology Specialist position with the Department of the Army. The appellant claimed to be unqualified, but the losing and gaining activities, as well as the CPMS Civilian Assistance and Re-Employment (9CARE) Division, found him fully qualified for the position. He declined the offer, compelling the Agency to remove him.

The Administrative Judge made the following findings:

- A charge of failure to accept a job offer after expiration of an overseas tour is “essentially identical to a charge of failure to accept a directed reassignment” (page 4);
- The absence of a rotation agreement does not preclude the Agency from enforcing the DoD five-year rule when a further tour extension is no longer justified (page 6); and
- The Agency can require an employee to submit an adequate PPP application to ensure proper and accurate registration (page 10).

The appellant has filed a timely petition for review of this initial decision; full Board review is pending. Although this case only involves an initial decision at this time, the Administrative Judge’s findings clearly reaffirm the legitimacy of the Department’s five-year limitation on foreign area employment and management’s right to enforce that policy through directed reassignment under the PPP.

Update: MSPB Case Report, June 10, 2005 indicates that on June 9, 2005 the Board will be issuing its Final Order denying the appellant’s petition for review.

Employee Benefit Information System (EBIS) Retirement Calculators

Are you aware of the tools available to you at the Army Benefits Center – Civilian (ABC-C) website? Once your log into the Benefits/EBIS section you can obtain your Personal Statement of Benefits as well as used the various calculators available to estimate your personal benefits such as retirement annuity, TSP annuity, and more.



Calculators

Your retirement estimate using EBIS can only be used for the “big picture”. If you are anticipating retirement within five years, you are encouraged to contact an ABC-C counselor directly and request a formal estimate that will take your entire career into consideration. If during your Federal career you have had a variety of different types of service (i.e. NAF, temporary time or military service) EBIS may not give you the most accurate information. This is commonly referred to as “complicated service.”

Visit the ABC-C website at <https://www.abc.army.mil> for more information.

PRINTING OF COMPLETED LN PERSONNEL ACTIONS IN GERMANY NOW DONE BY SUPERVISORS

Due to an automation initiative, Notification of Employment Status, AE Form 690-60B, which is the “SF-50” for Local National employees in Germany became available for the supervisor to print starting 1 March 2005. The forms are no longer provided to the CPACs via hard copy for distribution to the organizations.

Managers/Supervisors need to print the forms for their LN employees. Detailed information on printing can be found on the CHRA-E website at http://www.chra.eur.army.mil/modern/docs/LN_GE_NPA_GhostView_Print.pdf

Performance Appraisals

A quick reminder for managers and supervisors regarding performance appraisals:

- 15 Jun 05 Base System Ratings Due
(All GS/WS/WG 1 thru 5 and equivalent)
- 30 Jun 05 Senior System (Army-wide)
Rating Cycle Ends
(GS/GM/WS 13/14/15/SES)

EMPLOYMENT CORNER

This section is designed to familiarize readers with employment terms, tools, and processes.



Vacancy Announcement Board

Search and Self-Nominate for Army Job Announcements

What is VAB? Vacancy Announcement Board is the Army's electronic site for searching and self-nominating for Army Job Announcements.

It has a search tool that can narrow your search to specific criteria that you select, or you can search for a specific announcement by entering the announcement number.

After your initial search, you can further refine your search results by sorting the announcements. You can sort by clicking on the column titles on the search results page. For example, you can simply click on Closing Date to display the announcements based on the closing dates, soonest to longest, or you could click on Position to sort alphabetically by position titles.

A new feature of the Vacancy Announcement is an About the Position section which provides some insight into the specific organization and when provided a website for that organization.

The Army Vacancy Announcement Board may be accessed via the Employment section of the Army CPOL Portal at <http://www.cpol.army.mil>. Once in the Employment section, simply click on the SEARCH FOR JOBS box in the left hand column.

Department of Defense (DoD) Pipeline Program

The DOD Pipeline Program is an initiative to assist with the reemployment of partially-recovered injured employees. The program includes provisions for overhires and civilian pay funding for up to 1 year. With an annual reemployment goal of 200 DOD-wide and 50 for the DA, injury compensation program administrators are currently working to identify potential candidates for reemployment under the program.

More information about the program will be provided as it becomes available.



FEATURE SECTION

This section is designed to provide information about the different components of CHRA-E.

CHRA-E Employees Answer the Call

The CPOC welcomed back their HR Specialist on the Kaiserslautern Customer Focus Team, upon completion of his 9-month voluntary tour in Baghdad, Iraq as the Civilian Personnel Advisor for the U.S. Central Command.

As the sole civilian personnel advisor, he addressed issues covering all civilian personnel functional areas. During his time there, he established a process for distinguishing local national contractors from U.S. Forces CAC cardholders. This was a significant security/force protection accomplishment.

In addition, he collected donations, not from his Germany CPOC colleagues, but from around the world via his network of family and friends. These donations of school supplies, toys, and toiletries were distributed to the Iraqi children.

As he returned to Germany, another CPOC HR Specialist has taken up the reins for a voluntary 6-month assignment as the CENTCOM Civilian Personnel Advisor in Kuwait. The Hanau Customer Focus Team, and all of CHRA-E, wishes her all the best and we look forward to her return to the CPOC.

(Names withheld IAW Force Protection guidance.)

COMMENTS

We welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Send comments to the CHRA-Europe
Regional Director's Office at:

CHREURRDO@cpoceleur.army.mil